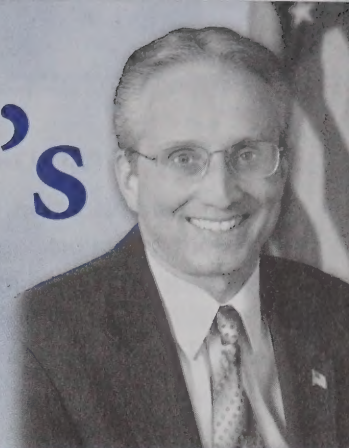




# The Commissioner's REPORT

New Jersey  
Transportation  
Highlights



Governor  
James E. McGreevey

April 2003

Commissioner  
Jack Lettiere

## News briefs

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Transportation Commissioner Jack Lettiere and Philadelphia Eagle Troy Vincent have recorded a radio announcement that urges motorists to follow three simple safety rules. It is being aired on New Jersey stations during April, May and June.

## Making our highways safer 'Safety First': Governor McGreevey's safety initiative

I am proud to announce that on March 5, NJDOT released "Safety First: Governor McGreevey's Highway Safety Initiative". **Safety First** is a three pronged approach to improve highway safety and save lives throughout the State. It targets engineering, education and enforcement improvements that will make a real difference in the way New Jersey motorists drive and the roads they travel.

Every year more than 700 New Jersey residents lose their lives in auto accidents. In November, Governor McGreevey directed the state Department of Transportation to convene a Highway Safety Task Force with members from NJDOT, the State Police, AAA, New Jersey Motor Carriers, Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Motor Carrier

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**Smart  
Transportation  
for  
Smart Growth**



## 'Safety First' Continued from front page

Safety Administration. **Safety First** is the result of the collaborative effort.

**Safety First** will implement engineering initiatives, designed to create greater visibility on our highways and improve emergency and traffic response in the event of an accident. For better driving conditions, NJDOT will install more than 500 miles of reflective pavement markers and introduce high visibility tape markings at every construction site in the state.

In addition, **Safety First** will spend over \$15 million to install median barriers throughout the state to reduce the risk of deadly crossover accidents. NJDOT will also increase its Emergency Service Patrol (ESP) incident management.

Through educational initiatives, **Safety First** will teach safer driving behavior. Education initiatives include new car-truck safety questions on the Drivers Test, a partnership with the Department of Education to improve driver education classes and mandatory truck safety lessons for CDL violators.

Finally, through added enforcement, **Safety First**

is designed to safeguard drivers through stringent enforcement of safety regulations. **Safety First** will raise fines for trucks that have faulty equipment and out of state trucks which are overweight. It will double fines for speeding and other hazardous driving violations in "Safety Priority Zones," corridors with high accident frequencies to reduce the risk of a crashes. **Safety First** also commits the NJDOT and the State Police to a truck inspection station at every major truck point of entry into the state within five years.

In addition to engineering, education and enforcement initiatives, Governor McGreevey has made the Highway Safety Task Force a permanent entity at the NJDOT. Recognizing that safety is not a static issue, I will meet with the Task Force on a regular basis to monitor the success of **Safety First** initiatives and to examine future initiatives for improving safety in New Jersey. To give us a better local perspective on safety issues, I have invited members of the League of Municipalities and the New Jersey Association of Counties to join the Task Force as well.

## Consolidating toll authorities

### Governor McGreevey plans for merging of Parkway, Turnpike

On February 14 Governor McGreevey announced a plan to merge the New Jersey Turnpike and the Garden State Parkway. Consolidation will result in savings, efficiency and unified transportation planning. The Senate in March passed enabling legislation.

The Garden State Parkway and the New Jersey Turnpike were established more than 50 years ago to provide an efficient roadway network. These goals have been accomplished and the two authorities have carried out their mission well. However, over the past 15 years, the infrastructure needs on both highways have outpaced the resources available; the lack of coordination has only exacerbated the problem.

The Governor's consolidation plan addresses the issue by providing for pooled resources and a unified transportation policy. A consolidation will yield two roads with uniform purpose, uniform principles, and uniform policy, poised to deliver the safe and efficient transportation network New Jersey residents deserve.

During the first year, we will save \$4 million in operating costs and eliminate more than 130 positions as we merge administrative, purchasing, legal, human resources, auditing and personnel functions. The operating savings will increase each year, reaching \$9.8 million annually by 2008.

Operational savings are only part of the picture. The fact remains that while we've come a long way to fixing the fatal flaws plaguing the E-ZPass system we inherited, \$300 million in debt remains. Simply put, the Parkway does not have the money to continue paying its share of the E-ZPass debt.

Without this merger, a toll hike on the Garden State Parkway is inevitable in the near future. And that is unacceptable.

By refinancing outstanding E-ZPass debt, along with existing Parkway and Turnpike debt, we will save roughly \$15 million annually on debt service, avoid a Parkway toll hike and put E-ZPass on firm financial footing. From there we can ensure the continued viability of E-ZPass and faster implementation of high-speed E-ZPass.

Fiscal arguments aside, the merger makes good planning sense. For too long, New Jersey's transportation planning network has been a fractured conglomeration of agencies and authorities. Under the proposed legislation, the New Jersey Turnpike Authority will be required to submit its capital program to my office for review and approval, ensuring that the Governor's Smart Growth and Fix It First goals are incorporated into future projects on the Turnpike and Parkway.



## 'Fix It First' in FY 04

# NJDOT unveils \$2.5 billion capital program

On March 3, I joined with NJ TRANSIT Executive Director George Warrington to announce a proposed \$2.58 billion capital program for the Department of Transportation and NJ TRANSIT that advances Governor McGreevey's anti-sprawl "Smart Growth" initiative, while supporting over 100,000 jobs.

The program, which has been presented to the Legislature for its approval, would be funded with \$1.16 billion in state funding and \$1.42 billion in federal funding. In a time of fiscal crisis, Governor McGreevey has maintained the state's commitment to transportation infrastructure. The Governor's budget will enable NJDOT to fund "Fix It First" projects, enhance safety and improve the quality-of-life for working families throughout the State.

Among others, the \$1.3 billion for NJDOT projects will provide \$183 million for safety and roadway preservation, \$126 million for congestion relief, and \$290 million for bridge repairs. The \$1.3 billion for NJ TRANSIT will provide \$222 million for rail infrastructure, \$172 million for new locomotives and rail cars, and more than \$100 million for safety and other service improvements.

Major NJDOT projects include the reconstruction of sections of I-80 in Bergen County and I-295 in Camden and Burlington counties. For the second year in a row, just 4 percent of the overall program will be used for highway expansion projects, significantly lower than the 20 percent level of previous programs. **The same amount of work is on the street. We have simply redirected the funds towards projects that repair and improve the infrastructure we already have.**

To encourage Smart Growth and redevelopment in

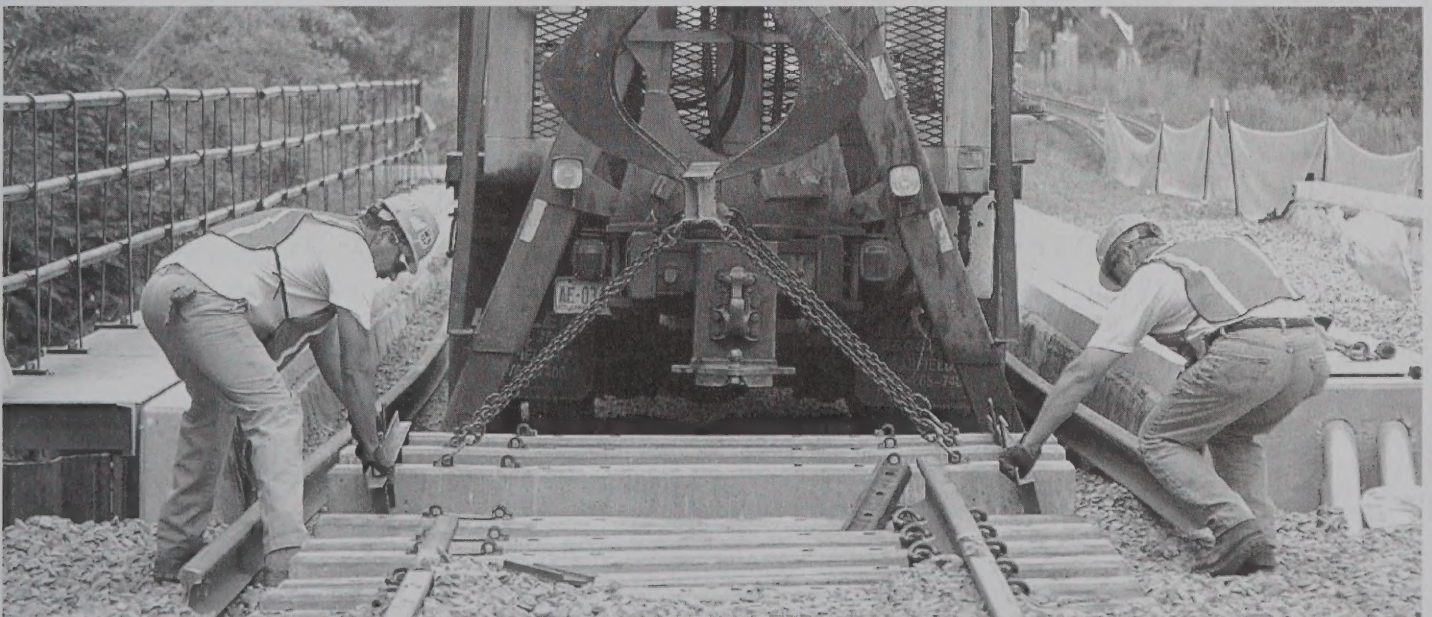
urban and older suburban areas, our program will advance a series of projects that would increase mobility and accessibility, such as improved access from I-280 to downtown Newark and from I-676 to downtown Camden. Substantial funding is proposed for the reconstruction of the Holland Tunnel approaches in Jersey City.

The program also proposes \$265 million in Local Aid support for county and municipal road projects. As part of the program, \$5 million is set aside for urban areas and \$3 million is proposed for transportation improvements for communities designated as "centers of place" under the State Development and Redevelopment Guide Plan.

Safety improvements are addressed in the proposed program through a series of short-term and long-term highway intersection projects designed to reduce accidents and traffic circle elimination projects.

The proposed program is aggressive and it will satisfy many of New Jersey's transportation needs. However, this year alone there will still be more than \$2 billion worth of unfunded NJDOT and NJ TRANSIT project that are ready to go to construction. These are needs that will go unmet.

I am committed to securing additional funding for critical transportation projects. We will have an excellent opportunity with the reauthorization of the federal Transportation Enhancement Act (TEA-21) and with the renewal of the State's Transportation Trust Fund. We have proposed a significant program for FY'04, and we will work very hard with every level of government to ensure we have the resources to fund more in the future.



## South Jersey Light Rail Line moves ahead

Perched on a bridge over the Cooper River north of Camden City Center, workers continue to set track for the South Jersey Light Rail

Line. This important public transit project will give residents access to the towns along the Camden to Trenton corridor.



## Making our highways safer

# NJDOT launches \$15 million attack on potholes

Under a \$15 million initiative, the New Jersey Department of Transportation is ready to take on the spring pothole season with 100 road crews, six special "pothole killer" trucks, paving contractors and a new online reporting system.

NJDOT is prepared to commit all of its 100 road crews to fill potholes and to call in paving contractors to entirely repave stretches of road badly damaged by potholes. To help the NJDOT keep on top of repairs, I would encourage you to report potholes either by calling toll-free: 1-800-POTHOLE, or by logging onto <http://www.njdot.nj.gov>.

Although the actual extent of this year's pothole problem will not be known until the advent of spring, NJDOT is geared up to undertake substantial repairs if necessary. This has been a severe winter weather season, with snow totals of 56 inches, five times the totals for last winter.

Potholes are created by major fluctuations in temperatures that cause moisture in roadways to freeze and thaw, breaking up the pavement. Such temperature changes typically occur in the spring as days become warmer, but temperatures drop below freezing at night.

NJDOT crews will fill potholes the old-fashioned way – by shoveling asphalt into the craters, and with the use of automated "pothole killer" trucks that require just a pair of workers to make repairs. A half dozen of the trucks will be used statewide, each capable of putting down three tons of patch a day.

Since January 1, we have poured more than 600 tons of asphalt into potholes across the state as temporary repairs until the warmer temperatures allow for permanent repair work. The 600 tons of asphalt was used to fill an estimated 1,500 to 2,000 potholes.

But, of course, the job has just begun.

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